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SPLENDID INHERITANCE.

revised BY
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THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

“Sweetest strains, from soft hearts stealing ;
Trumpets, notes of triumph pealing ;
Radiant wings and white stoles gleaming,
Up the steps of glory streaming ;
Where the heavenly bells are ringing,
Holy, holy, holy ! singing
 To the mighty Trinity !
Holy, holy, holy ! crying ;
For all earthly care and sighing
 In that city cease to be !”

“Every voice is there harmonious,
Praising God in hymns symphonious ;
Love each heart with light enfolding,
As they stand in peace beholding
 There the Triune Deity !”

THOMAS À KEMPIS.

CHAPTER I.

ST. PETER styles heaven an inheritance. The great business of the world is to amass, and hand down property. The father toils for the child, and the child rejoices in the father's legacies. Some estates have remained in one family for generations, and title-deeds, with ancient seals, are shown with pride to prove that goodly acres, hill and dale, park and meadow, have been under one name for centuries.

How great is a king's heir. The palace is glorious; fountains, statues, and paintings adorn it. Horses and carriages, men-servants and women-servants, and soldiers wait the nod of the Prince, the future king.

But St. Peter was writing to a handful of poor persecuted and scattered Christians. These comfortable words of hope cheered those in heaviness through the

temptations of their own wicked hearts and the malice of foes.

No certain dwelling-place, and no earthly inheritance was their portion, for houses and lands had been forsaken for Christ. Vineyards and olive yards and cattle and gold and silver were lacking.

Knowing the many sacrifices of the early missionaries of the cross, the Apostle wrote to cheer them, and to raise their thoughts from earth to heaven by a glance at the inheritance of the saints in light, where moth and rust and thieves were unknown.

This inheritance is to be possessed by and by, if man complies with God's conditions.

The young heir walks with pleasure over the domain soon to be his, marking its beauty, and planning changes.

The Prince longs for the time when the crown shall press his brow, and he shall be acknowledged as ruler.

The same vividness is here given to the

hope of heaven. The believer is often to look on it, and behave himself so as to be "a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Our Lord's warning is, "Let no man take thy crown."

How few think of this glorious inheritance and fadeless crown. An earthly bauble draws their gaze, while they have no eye or ear for the things of heaven.

In the East it was an ancient custom for sons to receive their portion in the inheritance while the father lived, as in the Prodigal Son's narrative. So God gives a part of His gift here on earth.

The earthly father bestows a part of the inheritance to his children gladly in food and clothing, and education and support. God sets the solitary in families, that mutual assistance may be rendered; and as a rule the help goes downward, and the child returns the blessing to his own children; and so the words and acts of fathers and mothers and grandparents

bless the world and make it happy, and good men and women thus become the shadows and representatives of God.

The family possessions are handed to the children and pass on to the next generation ; and many an heirloom and relic, slight in intrinsic value, is invaluable by association and memory.

In using these heritages, however, public as well as private benefit must be considered. No man "liveth to himself." On German roads, trees shelter the traveler from the sun, and yield their fallen fruit to refresh him. While we live, we should strive to make earth as like heaven as possible, and true living is holy and happy living.

Doddridge makes this the true end of life in the following lines :

" ' Live while you live,' the epicure would say,
 ' And seize the pleasures of the present day !'
 ' Live while you live,' the sacred preacher cries,
 ' And give to God each moment as it flies !'
• Lord, in my views, let both united be—
 I live in pleasure, when I live to Thee !"

There are too many who would convey sensual ideas of pleasure to heaven. Rabbi Mayemon said, that after the coming of the Messiah, and His raising the dead, that many affirmed that "they shall be gathered together in the garden of Eden, and shall eat and drink and satiate themselves all the days of the world. There the houses shall be all builded with precious stones; the beds shall be made of silk, and the rivers shall flow with wine and spicy oil."

Pleasures of sense fail here by excess, or the infirmity of age, and should not be expected in a higher state where the spirit is to rule.

The highest earthly happiness is not in eating and drinking, which too often clog the soul if there is immoderate use. The lover of music, lost in glad song, is not thinking of his body. The artist Martin had to be forced away to his meals, as the mind had so overridden the body that the desire of food was temporarily lost. The

worshiper of God, when in heavenly courts he is hearing the words of the Almighty and seeing visions of the Heavenly Father and the Divine Son, through the Holy Spirit, thinks not of earthly nourishment or bodily adornment. The soul preparing for endless association with God and His holy angels must learn how to begin that life in earthly streets.

Praise is the endless occupation of heaven.

The following Olympic ode of Pindar (Strophe IV), translated by Dr. Gilbert West, gives a view of heaven as seen by a wise pagan :

“ But in the happy Fields of Light
Where Phœbus with an equal Ray
Illuminates the balmy Night,
And gilds the cloudless Day.
In peaceful, unmolested joy,
The Good their smiling Hours employ.
Them no uneasy Wants constrain
To vex th’ ungrateful soil,
To tempt the dangers of the billowy Main,
And break their strength with unabating Toil,

A frail disastrous Being to maintain,
But in their joyous calm Abodes,
The Recompence of Justice they receive;
And in the Fellowship of Gods
Without a Tear eternal Ages live."



CHAPTER II.

THE INCORRUPTIBILITY OF HEAVEN.

“ No joy is true save that which hath no end;
No life is true save that which liveth ever;
No health is sound, save that which God doth send;
No love is real save that which changeth never.”

“ Heaven’s beauty is forever vernal;
Its glory is the glory of its King,
Undying, incorruptible, eternal;
And ever new the songs its dwellers sing.”

HORATIUS BONAR.

The perfection of the heavenly inheritance is indicated by the word “incorruptible.” Corruption destroys man’s earthly possessions. He rises early and late takes rest, but vainly seeks enduring substance, and must ever renew his work. His grain decays. His house is no sooner finished than it begins to waste away. The dearly loved body begins to die on the day of birth, and every breath and heart-beat hasten the end. We die

daily. The mind and memory are enfeebled by age. The laughing child of yesterday is the wrinkled old man of to-morrow, as the swiftly flying years bear us rapidly through life's journey of a day. Still the setting sun lights up the window of the poorest cottage with golden lustre, and the sowing in corruption may be but the preparation of a glorious harvest of incorruption, where Christ shall clothe His own with immortality. As Lyte sings :

“ Change and decay in all around I see ;
Oh ! Thou who changest not ; abide with me.”

Men might call gold imperishable as it shines on a king's crown, or rules commerce. St. Peter boldly speaks of it as perishing, and asserts that a Christian's faith is far more valuable. In treating of the blood of Christ as compared with earthly treasure the Apostle shows his scorn of decaying earthly things by styling silver and gold corruptible things.

Everything on earth is corruptible. The Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of goods, which others defend with their lives, because they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. So they laid up a good foundation for the coming time, making to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that they might be received into everlasting habitations.

A fable represents a king, expecting deposition, as sending his goods to an island where he could enjoy them when his kingdom failed him. This is a good picture of the wise Christian.

St. Paul looked on the athletic races, and, taking up his parable, said that the garland of leaves reminded him of a better race, and more glorious crown, even an incorruptible one. The leaves on the victor's brow soon withered, and a new aspirant took the place of the conqueror, but the crown of righteousness, which the Lord would give to all those

that loved His appearing, was a crown of life which would lose none of its brilliancy during eternal ages, and which could not be lost, for those who enter the city of God, and become kings and priests unto Him, go no more out forever.

The new birth is of incorruptible seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. While death overcomes those born as mortals, the new birth is the beginning of a deathless existence.

The house made with hands is a decaying fleshly tabernacle, the house of God, not made with hands, prepared by God for those that love Him, endureth forever.

The body is sown in corruption. The much-loved form is laid in the ground, which drinketh in the mourner's tears. But the promise is full and clear that the dead in Christ shall live again.

Edward Rowland Sill's lines teach the bereaved ones how to leave the cemetery

for the mournful journey home to the sad and silent house :

“ Yet, 'twill only be a sleep,
When, with songs and dewy light,
Morning blossoms out of night ;
She will open her blue eyes
'Neath the palms of paradise
While we foolish ones shall weep.”

God is incorruptible, and hence, idolatry is foolish, as it makes images of corruptible men and birds and beasts. An ox, that eateth hay, displaces the ever-living God. The Athenians bowed down to gods of gold, silver, and stone, graven by art; and now similar idols are in men's hearts, if not in their houses. The miser is an idolater, and worships a perishable thing, and his act is wicked.

The “uneasy head” of a king teaches that power is not to be worshiped, and its intoxication of mind lifts men up against God. King Nebuchadnezzar gloats over the fine buildings of Babylon as his work, and puts down and sets up his dependents at his will, but the cor-

ruptibility of station is seen when God punishes him by sending him among the beasts, where no roof covered him; and the dew came on his unprotected body.

Evil and bloody monarchs have often proclaimed the fact by their acts that no human being is fit for arbitrary power, and the control of millions of lives.

The stone coffin of an English king was used as a horse-trough. Courtiers quarrel over new positions before the body of a monarch is cold in death.

Shirley's lines are true :

“The glories of our birth and state
Are shadows, not substantial things ;
There is no armor against fate ;
Death lays his icy hands on kings :
Scepter and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor, crooked scythe and spade.”

* * * * *

“Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet, and blossom in the dust.”

Good deeds are incorruptible, and lead heavenward.

CHAPTER III.

THE PURITY OF HEAVEN.

"Blest are the pure in heart. Wouldst thou be blest?
He'll cleanse thy spotted soul. Wouldst thou find rest?
Around thy toils and cares He'll breathe a calm,
And to thy wounded spirit lay a balm;
From fear, draw love! and teach thee where to seek
Lost strength and grandeur—with the bowed and
meek."

RICHARD H. DANA.

Heaven is a place of purity. The throne of God is white. The robes of the redeemed are white and spotless. Heaven is "undefiled"—this word can hardly be applied to earthly things.

The man seeking holiness is hindered by a thousand temptations of Satan on every side.

The ground was cursed for man's sin, and thorns abound.

"Man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil."

The Majesty of Heaven is too often insulted by ribald songs, low jests, and profane oaths from mouths which should utter the praises of God.

If one who loves and fears God walks the street, or rides in a public conveyance, or goes into a place of public concourse, how often is his ear pained and his heart grieved by language which might draw tears from the eyes of angels. Swearers clothe themselves with cursing as a garment, and no one can approach them without beholding their clothing.

If, in the silence of your room, you take up a favorite author, how much may you find that defiles rather than elevates. In the midst of much that is beautiful and brilliant, there is still something to shun and condemn.

Our public prints contain much that reminds us that we dwell in a polluted land. Accounts of wars, and crimes committed by nations, as well as individual sins, are paraded before the public eye,

until the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. Murders of unparalleled atrocity, and thefts of wonderful magnitude, continually teach us that we do not dwell in an undefiled land.

But, to come nearer home to our own households and social circles, who does not feel, after long intercourse with those about him, that while he can find much in them to love and respect, still imperfections abound?

When a man turns within, knowing his spirit as no one else but God knows it, how great an amount he finds of ill that makes him ready to cry, with St. Paul, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Or, with a later saint, "Lord, deliver me from that bad man, myself!"

This hard lesson is for our good. We are not innocent, and we dwell in a polluted land. He who warns us of our danger, and shows us a way of escape, is our true friend, and he who prophesies

smooth things, and says, "This is your rest," is our greatest enemy.

At a wayside fountain, where robbers prowled, a friendly inscription ran: "Drink and away;" so travelers heavenward must hasten on through the world's dangers.

Every morning sun looks on shameful deeds, and every night conceals a thousand sins.

The Scriptures teach that all men are sinners. A sad picture is in the beginning. Adam and Eve, in conscious guilt, leave Paradise; Cain commits murder. For perfection, we must turn from man to the living God. Heaven alone is really pure, and "there is none good, save One, that is God."

The ancient High Priest offered for his own sins; the Son of God is "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

Then, let us lift our eyes to this blessed Saviour, consecrated forevermore, and

strive by His help to fit ourselves, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to enter that blessed land into which nothing defiling can come ; and let us place our hopes on that undefiled inheritance, rather than on earthly things stained with sin.

When Beaumont and Fletcher use the expression,

“ A soul as white as heaven,”

they describe what a future world may behold ; but what this world lacks, by the confession of saints and martyrs themselves.

However, heaven may be tasted here, as prayer opens its door, and airs from Paradise refresh weary hearts.

Love brings heaven down to earth, and individual and family love are exalted by the touch of Divine Love as Charles Wesley sings :

“ Love divine, all love excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down.”

In Wordsworth's “ Intimations of Immortality,” we read : “ Heaven lies about us in our infancy !”

Children, by their innocent smiles and loving words, draw parents upward. R. H. Stoddard, in "The Children's Prayer," paints their guilelessness :

"If there is anything that will endure
The eye of God because it still is pure,
It is the spirit of a little child,
Fresh from His hand, and therefore undefiled.
Nearer the gate of Paradise than we,
Our children breathe its airs, its angels see;
And when they pray, God hears their simple prayer."

Though the poet's fancy here represents spotlessness, children have evil thoughts, and are not yet arrived at the state which heaven presents, though they are nearer it than men and women who have passed through more temptations and trials; and the Redeemer bids us to imitate their simplicity if we would enter Paradise.

The warning to the Corinthians not to defile their bodies, because they were God's temple and Christ's members, gives a high standard of Christian living.

Pure hands and a pure heart are needed to see God. Evil companions and improper books draw men away from God. The purging with hyssop, or rather the cleansing of Christ's blood, makes clean, so that the sanctified may ascend the hill of the Lord, and rise up in His holy place, to hold fellowship with angels clad in white, and with God Himself. The bride, the church of Christ, is "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." The garments of "priests and Levites in the Jewish temple services were undoubtedly white." The white surplice, whether from Jewish usage, or the ordinary dress of antiquity, is a symbol of purity. (Rev. Dr. H. C. McCook's *Gospel in Nature, Snow Purity*, p. 160; and Dean Stanley's *Christian Institutions*, chap. 8, p. 178.)

Such garments, and a corresponding inner life, should bring clergy and people to the use of "a pure language," which Zephaniah 3:9 describes in worship,

“ that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent.”

As Keble expresses it :

“ *He* shall descend, who rules above,
And the pure language of His love
All tongues of men shall tune.”

The white robes of Holy Baptism and Confirmation and Marriage are the feeble attempts of earth to show that she half understands the symbols of heaven ; and is trying to learn her lesson, even if it is imperfectly comprehended, by reason of surrounding moral darkness, which clouds the spiritual eye. If this poor, imperfect worship is glorious, how will the future glory excel it, according to Spenser's lines :

“ What wonder,
Frail men, whose eyes seek heavenly things to see,
At sight thereof so much enravished be ?”



CHAPTER IV.

HEAVEN UNFADING.

“ Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy :
Ear hath not heard its deep song of joy !
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair ;
Sorrow and death may not enter there ;
Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom ;
For beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb,
It is there, it is there, my child !”

MRS. HEMANS.

A flower is beautiful on its stem, as the parent stalk sends the life blood through it, and it blushes in redness, or smiles in whiteness, or bears a more reflective hue in a purple shade, while its green framework makes a noble setting to the picture. But he who plucks the flower has killed it ; and soon its colors have faded, and it is tossed aside. Here is a vivid representation of all earthly things, but the volume of Inspiration says of heaven, that it “fadeth not away.” An unfading

flower would indeed be a valuable possession, and, if hosts of men at great expense serve the world with these passing glories, let the wise man seek an everlasting lustre.

St. James looked on the fading grass and wrote, "The sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways."

What image could more forcibly portray the fleeting nature of earthly things? Who that is wise would place his hopes on those things which perish so rapidly? Every year this scene passes before our sight; does it leave St. James's lesson on the mind? In spring nature decks herself in new array, and every leaf and plant receives a new life, but in a few days the parching heat dries up the vegetation, and it passes away, never to be seen again. Reader, are you trusting to hopes as uncertain as the grass of the

field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven?

But the fading grass only conforms to nature's common law. All things pass away.

A goodly city may be destroyed by a falling spark of fire. The man who is to-day a beggar was yesterday a millionaire. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away. Suppose one were to bring a bird of Paradise from India with great care, having invested his little all in it, and just when he had been offered a large price for it, should see it escape from his hands and be lost in mid-air. Such is the man who strives to hold the world; it eludes his grasp and leaves an empty hand; as a great ruler ordered his body to be buried with open hands, that his people could see that he could carry nothing with him into another world.

Cerates flung his gold into the sea, with the words, "I will destroy thee, lest thou destroy me."

Many a man would have been happier and better, and had more hope of heaven, if he had imitated his example.

Honor is a fleeting breath, a moment here, then gone forever. Men cried, "Hosannah," to our Lord, and in a few hours the mad cry, "Crucify Him," took its place.

Friends are fading. Parents weep over sweet infant faces cold in death, and children gently bear loved parents to the tomb.

But there are imperishable things. The crown of glory "fadeth not away."

Then thought should rise above visible, temporal things to unseen and eternal realities, as alone worthy of pursuit.

Men who call lands after their names are building on sand, and our Lord warns them to escape the power of the beating storm by selecting a firm, rocky foundation.

Affections are to be set on things above, and treasure to be laid up in heaven.

Then the loss of corruptible things can be calmly met; for if the fashion of this world passeth away, the eternal world will soon be ours.

Horace compares the succeeding heirs of men to the waves that stir the water. Stand on the seashore, and listen to the constant mournful splash of the breakers. One has hardly finished its uneasy journey, and lost itself in the sand, before another is at its heels; and so like racing steeds they rush to destruction. Thus by day and night for centuries the song of life and death is repeated. So man lives his momentary life, and his successor takes his place.

When a man dies, how quickly the past tense is used. That "was" his horse and carriage, and that "was" his house, but his driving and building are over. Where is he now? His earthly life must answer the query, and how blessed when it can be said that the fading earthly inheritance has been succeeded by the eternal and heavenly one.

Increased riches make troubled hearts, and slaves to wealth. If the holder of real estate saw his ground washed away by the sea, or swallowed by the earthquake, he would realize his loss. But speculation, or dissipation, or neglect, may remove property as if by the enchanter's wand. Diggers for hid treasure have imagined it in their hand, and then it has apparently suddenly vanished; in like manner riches have really disappeared.

Sometimes a curse seems to have hung over ill-gotten gains, as church property wrongly taken from the church by false government officers, and bestowed on those who had no real right to God's property, has been thought to injure the holder.

Special temptations surround wealth, and often make the owner of it miserable, as he fears its loss or is defrauded of his rights in ways beyond his control.

Position is a fading honor. The king is crowned with the rising of the sun.

The armor of the soldiers shines brightly. Martial music stirs the air. The bells peal merrily, and the people huzza, and cry "God save the King!" The same sun is sinking gently to his rest, and a loud cry is heard, "The King is dead." Listen to the tolling bells and behold the crape that betokens sorrow. Another shout breaks the air: "The King lives!" and a successor has taken up the honor and pain and danger of sovereignty. "The King never dies" in the legal fiction, but the earthly king's breath is in his nostrils, and he is crushed by the moth, and his house of clay breaks in pieces like that of the peasant.

The attempt of parents to secure an inheritance for their children often fails in an earthly sense by the death of the children before the parents. Millions of dollars are spent in monuments which adorn beautiful cemeteries where mourning parents strive to keep up the memory of these departed ones. Were it not

better in churches and orphan asylums and schools to assist other little ones on their path to heaven, spending what would have been needed to support the dead child in alms? I knew an excellent wife of a good clergyman who gave an annual contribution to missions in memory of a son who died in early youth. This is a praiseworthy example. A worthy way to remember a dead child is to imitate its innocent life, so that the family broken on earth may be reunited in heaven.

The best inheritance that a parent can give a child is religious teaching, fortified by a shining example of holiness.

The earthly property, acquired by toil and pain, may prove a curse if the heir has not been trained to properly use it; the heavenly property can but result in endless blessing.

Old and young can echo the beautiful words of C. F. Alexander's poem on the "Bliss of Earth and Heaven :"

“The roseate hues of early dawn,
The brightness of the day,
The crimson of the sunset sky,
How fast they fade away !
Oh ! for the pearly gates of heaven !
Oh ! for the golden floor !
Oh ! for the Sun of Righteousness
That setteth nevermore !

“The highest hopes we cherish here,
How fast they tire and faint !
How many a spot defiles the robe
That wraps an earthly saint !
Oh ! for a heart that never sins !
Oh ! for a soul washed white !
Oh ! for a voice to praise our King,
Nor weary day or night !

“Here faith is ours, and heavenly hope,
And grace to lead us higher ;
But there are perfectness and peace
Beyond our best desire.
Oh ! by Thy love and anguish, Lord !
Oh ! by Thy life laid down !
Oh ! that we fall not from Thy grace,
Nor cast away Thy crown !”



CHAPTER V.

HEAVEN'S SURPRISES.

When Horatius Bonar saw the magnificence of the London Exhibition at the World's Fair, in A. D. 1851, a thought of higher glory above entered the devout mind of this gifted clegyman, and prompted a beautiful poem, from which we quote a small portion :

“ What to that for which we're waiting
Is this glittering earthly toy?
Heavenly glory, holy splendor,
Sum of grandeur, sum of joy.
Not the gems that time can tarnish,
Not the hues that dim and die,
Not the glow that cheats the lover,
Shaded with mortality.
Heir of glory,
That shall be for thee and me.

“ Soon where earthly beauty blinds not,
No excess of brilliance palls,
Salem, city of the holy,
We shall be within thy walls !
There, beside yon crystal river,
There, beneath life's wondrous tree,

There, with naught to cloud or sever,
Ever with the Lamb to be !
Heir of glory,
That shall be for thee and me !

When the wondrous White City lay on the shore of Lake Michigan a vast mass of humanity from the corners of the earth rushed through it, glancing in bewilderment for a few days at inventions and displays of nature and art which would repay years of study. A few months passed, and the goodly vision on land and water faded as a dream.

This is a picture of life, and the more glorious it is the more does the gazer miss its departure. Heaven is a place where glory ever abides, and the pictures do not vanish.

Earth is full of glad surprises. Christmas draws near. See the whispered conferences of kind parents, and the stealthy returns from the city at evening with mysterious packages, locked into a room, or shut up in a closet, and soon you will

hear glad shouts on the birthday of Christ, in the dawn of the morning, indicating that the Christmas tree has borne precious and acceptable fruit, and old as well as young are made glad by the presents which have been procured at the cost of care, and sometimes of self-denial.

Larger gifts may come in like manner. I knew a case where a gentleman bought a splendid house on a high hill, commanding a beautiful view, and then ushered his wife into it before she knew it was to be their home.

In St. Peter's first epistle, 1:4, the heavenly inheritance is described as "reserved."

When a will is read each heir listens attentively to know what his portion will be, and at once, on hearing his legacy, plans how to enjoy it. The Word of God is the will of our Heavenly Father bequeathing to us needful and lasting good things.

Jesus, our Elder Brother, went to heaven

to prepare a place for us, and to receive us there when life's storms are over.

The poor dweller in Europe sees in imagination an earthly Paradise on American soil. Frequent letters from emigrants, and intercourse with those who have trod these favored shores, induce him to sell his little possessions, and start on a dangerous voyage. But sometimes wife and children must be left behind. How eagerly they await the letter which assures them that a place is reserved for them, and how readily they sail over the broad sea to embrace once more the parent and father.

When the French steamer "la Gas-cogne" reached the wharf in New York, after a voyage of danger and delay, with icy rigging, the shore was lined with those who rushed to look on her, and the smiles and tears and kisses of passengers, and those who came to welcome them, as alive from the dead, was such a sight as perhaps the great city never witnessed on any other occasion.

The joy of the father of the Prodigal, and the Shepherd, and the woman with her coin, was that of the finder of the lost, and surprise forms a large element of the narratives drawn by the Divine hand of Christ.

When a poor soul enters Paradise, the surprise that life's hard struggle is over must constitute much of the joy.

No more toiling for bread; no more heartaches, or misunderstandings with friends, or disappointments, or falls into sin, or painful sickness, or agonizing death. The fetters are knocked off. The slave is free. The song of liberty rises high and strong to that Blessed Lord who has loved and redeemed His people and brought them to glory; and the thought of the eternity of the happiness is indeed ravishing. A pleasant walk or ride or journey with a friend, or the enjoyment of music or painting or reading is ever disturbed here below by the thought that it is fleeting, and the joy of

to-day is to be followed by the toil of to-morrow; and social intercourse with beloved ones is embittered by the prospect of separation by absence or death. No friend leaves heaven, and the reunited ones bask in God's smile forever; and, it may be, talk of the trials on the earthly journey, as travelers love to rehearse dangers overcome, or business men delight to recount the hard struggles which brought them success. The Lord's leadings are pleasant in retrospect, even on earth—how much more in heaven.

Reservation is the rule of life. A child may not control an estate until the age of majority. Parents and guardians oversee it, but it is the more appreciated when obtained.

One's own mind is ever stimulated by the hope of something better in reserve. Every acquisition in learning opens the door for another advance. The alphabet prompts the child to read, and then all stores of learning lie open. One truth

has been well styled the John the Baptist of another; and the higher the development of the mind, the greater is this grasping forward.

He who acquires some property, stimulates a desire for more, and a farm encourages the wish for the adjoining one; and the man with a million dollars is more madly set on securing a second million than he was in obtaining the first.

Human desires grow with every success, and yet are ever disappointed, because the husks that feed swine will not satisfy immortal beings. The very disappointment of the artist or poet, or even the seeker after religious truth, is no doubtful prophecy of a higher state, where the aspiring soul will truly know God, and be known of Him. This eternal life begins in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as God here, and is perfected in a fuller knowledge hereafter. The stream that makes glad the city of God here, is a rill

compared with the river of Paradise. The earthly gold is dimmed by age or drops from the hand of its possessor. "The gold of that land is good" and lasting. Animal joys exhaust themselves and fail; spiritual joys only increase by use. The cruse of oil and the barrel of meal fail not. The heavenly manna ever falls, and the loaves and fishes are ever reproduced by Him who is the Bread of Heaven.

Hidden things are much desired. Mystery and secrecy impel every thoughtful mind to action. Half-revealed secrets stir eager curiosity to find out the rest. The Saviour told a part of the coming glory, and concealed the rest, as men were not able to bear it. St. Paul could not describe the glories of his heavenly vision, for earth's inhabitants cannot comprehend the new Jerusalem above until they behold it, and with enlarged faculties enjoy it. It is impossible to describe the grandeur of a great city to a

child just learning to talk and think ; how much more must mortals fail in reading the life of immortals. It is needful to wait for the hereafter before the reservation can be made the appropriation.

Meantime let us strive after a likeness of heaven on earth. In Wordsworth's poem "To a Skylark," "heaven and home" are styled "kindred points," and homes here should be made to resemble heaven.



CHAPTER VI.

PERSONALTY IN HEAVEN.

“ Thus while the mute creation downward bend
Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,
Man looks aloft, and with erected eyes
Beholds his own hereditary skies.”

DRYDEN.

The English poet expresses an ancient idea that the raising of the sublime countenance of man toward heaven is a looking after the Father in Heaven, “ His own hereditary skies ” implies personal possession.

Luther said there was much theology in pronouns, and St. Peter’s declaration concerning heaven is “ reserved for you.”

There is some difference as to whether some one else is cold, hungry, sick, or dying, or you *yourself*. The legacy of another man may not affect you. The accident which sent another man with broken limbs and bleeding body to the

hospital draws a passing word of sympathy from you, as you greet your family, and sit down to a comfortable meal by a cheerful fire. Suppose you had been in the ambulance, and a telegram had called your family to your suffering couch, how different would have been the scene!

Every man desires heaven, but what is he doing to gain it? Many seem to expect it by proxy, and wife and children are to open the door for them.

Wars of succession have caused seas of human blood to flow. Pretenders or rightful heirs have struggled for years to secure a throne, and too often obtained it by murdering their own relatives, and by deceit and treachery.

Tamerlane watches the ant bearing its burden in the ruined house where he is concealed as a fugitive, and beholds its success, after sixty-nine failures, and is encouraged to make a new trial for power.

Bruce, in the barn where he is hid for

safety from foes, sees the industrious spider twelve times fail in endeavoring to ascend the beam, and rejoice in success the thirteenth time. He has been defeated twelve times, and now with new resolve tries the thirteenth time and victory is on his banner.

These men believed that they must have the kingdom, and would not despair.

Have you tried as hardly to obtain a secure kingdom and a lasting crown? The kingdom of heaven is taken by violence, but many seem to think that hand or foot need not be lifted, some favorable breeze will waft them within it.

My friend! let me look into your eye for a moment, and in quiet ask you earnestly a few most important questions. When you rose this morning what did you think about? You reply, your food and business, your oxen and lands, your stocks and bonds, your approaching marriage, or, if you are a man advanced in age, the schooling and settlement of your

children, or the journey you were to take with your loving wife.

But were these thoughts earthly? Was the day made holy by the sweet incense of prayer rising from your own apartment, and the family altar? The rising sun threw its glorious splendor into your room, and opened your eyelids; did a thought of the Sun of Righteousness illumine your heart and did your mind run forward to the final Resurrection morning, when the true and endless day should dawn?

Is it the morning of the blessed Lord's Day? How are you going to spend it? Is an excursion of so-called pleasure to keep you from the rich, undying joys of worship in the Lord's house, or are you preparing, with a grateful heart, to partake of the broken Body and shed Blood of our Lord and Master in the Sacred Feast ordained by Him as a pledge and foretaste of heavenly bliss and higher communion with Christ above? Are you

intending in an animal way to idle these sacred hours at home?

Is heaven a reality to you, like that of a proposed European sojourn? Are you cultivating its spirit in peace, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost? If you are to travel, you study your destination, and the cost and mode of reaching it. If you saw a man foodless and penniless asserting that he was bound for London or San Francisco you would call him insane. You are bound on a longer journey, which needs more preparation. You would learn the language and customs of a foreign land where you were to dwell, will you pay less attention to your desired everlasting home? If you wish to be a fellow-citizen with saints above, learn saints' language here below.

“Those heavenly gates forever bar pollution, sin, and shame.”

Could a crowd be stopped in a busy city street, and asked their objects of pursuit,

on a Monday morning, when the week's business begins, what varied answers would result. Try them again the following Monday, and it would be found that a few days had swept away the old air castles, and new ones had been built, to perish in like manner.

How different the Christian's hopes and aims which enter within the veil, and rest on God. To him the service in the church makes it, as Watts's divine song has it,

“Like a little heaven below.”

Each earthly wind is what the heavenly-minded Cowper calls

“The breath of heaven.”

The aspiring heart sees heavenly gems in the stars, the train of the silver moon, and God is remembered in His works as the centre of heaven. “Whom have I in heaven but Thee,” cries the devout soul, “and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with Thee.”

A bright summer day is in truth a heavenly day to a devout spirit, as it rejoices with Nature in God.

“Heaven
Is as the book of God before thee set,
Wherein to read His wondrous works.”

—*Milton : Paradise Lost, VIII, 67.*

Shakespeare's beautiful expression for the stars,

“Patines of bright gold”

has drawn admiration; but gold pales before their distant brilliancy.

Bryant says of the Apennines,

“Fair as the hills of Paradise they rise.”

When poets would seek to elevate earth, they naturally turn to heaven for figures; and Sinai, as the Mount of the Law, and Tabor, that of the Transfiguration, and Zion, as the seat of the temple, raise the thought heavenward. Every mountain, elevated above the toil and dust of the work-day world, is a glimpse of heaven. Even clouds are beneath the feet as

one gazes skyward, while the whiter clouds of the upper air seem like the pure abode of angels.

All earthly comparisons fail to portray heaven's glory ; and all earthly preparations are as nothing to that revelation that awaits "the dead in Christ." One who, after having toiled long years as a leader in the Church of Christ—Rev. Dr. B. B. Hotchkin, who has finished his labors and exchanged earth for Paradise, thus aspired after his true home :

"O sing of the world where alone there is home,
Of the household band that is over the flood,
Where at length the child to the parent has come,
To repose by the banks of the River of God."



CHAPTER VII.

FAITH.

God's power guarding His people
"through faith unto salvation ready to be
revealed in the last time," I St. Peter 1:5.

"This world is all a fleeting show,
For man's illusion given;
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow—
There's nothing true but Heaven!"

MOORE.

Macknight explains the word "kept" or guarded in St. Peter's cheerful promise as representing "believers, as attacked by evil spirits and wicked men, their enemies, but defended against their attacks by the power of God, through the influence of their faith, just as those who remain in an impregnable fortress are secured from the attacks of their enemies by its ramparts and walls."

Faith is the hand which accepts God's

guardianship, and clings to Him for aid.

In prayer, God has been likened to the firm-set shore, to which men in a boat pull, and find its firmness their hope. God changeth not, but men must change from evil to good, to draw near to Him.

If we are striving to be pure, as Christ is pure, we can calmly look on a defiled world as a tarrying place, on the way to "fairer worlds on high."

If we seek the unfading glorious crown, to be given by Christ to those who love His appearing, and await His kingdom, the thousand changes and chances of the world need not unduly affect us. The city with foundations is in expectation.

Riches or poverty, applause or contempt, sickness or health, will be as nothing, when compared to the glory to be revealed.

Are we waiting in eager hope for that time when this corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; or are we settling ourselves

down in contentment in the midst of these decaying things?

He who trusts in the world is no safer than was the inhabitant of wicked Sodom, when he laid himself down to rest, expecting a happy morning, and never again opened his eyes on earth.

If we are living as the children of God, let us ever look for that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Let the blissful hope of gaining it cheer the darkest day of life, and shed sunshine over all our path.

If we find in our hearts no daily thoughts of God, and no daily hopes of heaven, let us fear lest we come short of that rest. Let us awake from our deathly sleep, and shake off the fetters of Satan, and open our eyes, that we may see the vanity of all the perishable things that surround us, and the unspeakable glory of the pleasures which are at God's right hand; and with deep repentance, and earnest faith in that blessed Saviour,

who alone can open to us "the gate of everlasting life," let us with firm purpose of heart, seek after that inheritance which is "incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," that our names may be written in heaven.

Earth's sorrows vanish before such a hope, and the saints who have taught the way heavenward, give encouragement that we may join their blessed company.

In the Tyrolese mountains, women and children sing national songs, until the voices of fathers, husbands, and brothers answer from the hills, as they return home, in the evening; thus earth answers heaven, as with angel and archangel we praise God on earth, and heavenly thoughts break earth's dullness.

Lowell, in "The Vision of Sir Launfal," writes :

"'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking."

Will not poor man seek to enter those

“ever during gates,” as Milton styles them, which open wide, with “harmonious sound,” “on golden hinges moving”?

Men toil in the dusty mine and on the dangerous sea and in the field and the marts of commerce for fleeting gold; but here is true and lasting riches.

Life wastes in toil; and the boy who found heaven near as he lisped his infant prayer at his mother’s knee, now holds earth before his eyes to cast a dark shade on its glory. But a paper wall divides from death. To-morrow’s sun may look on a dead body, while to-day it beholds one living and active. Young’s “Night Thoughts” contain this note of warning:

“While man is growing, life is in decrease,
And cradles rock us nearer to the tomb,
Our birth is nothing but our death begun.”

The infant’s death is an admission to Paradise. Coleridge wrote this epitaph on an infant:

“ Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade,
Death came with friendly care ;
The opening bud to heaven conveyed,
And bade it blossom there.”

The bliss of young life is exchanged
for the greater bliss of heaven.

The spires of churches pointing heaven-
ward silently raise the mind to that
blessed land.

The influence of the Holy Spirit, and
the beckonings of conscience, would move
us to secure the heavenly inheritance.

To those who wait for it, these anony-
mous lines are full of meaning :

“ So I am watching quietly,
Every day ;
Whenever the sun shines brightly
I rise and say,—
‘ Sunlight is the shining of His face,’
And look into the gates of His high place,
Beyond the sea ;
For I know He is coming shortly
To summon me.

“ And when a shadow falls across the window
Of my room,
Where I am working my appointed task,

I lift my head to watch the door and ask
If He is come.
And the angel answers sweetly
In my home,
'Only a few more shadows,
And He will come.'"

Christ was very near to such a waiting soul.

Warren Hastings, before he was ten years old, formed the purpose of purchasing back his ancestral estate, "Daylesford." The dream on a summer's day, as he lay beside the stream which bordered his native village, became a reality in after years; but the earthly inheritance must be given up at death; many are laboring for a better country, even a heavenly one.

A saintly woman who had, in the duties of a clergyman's wife, lifted many a sorrowing heart, died of a painful and lingering illness. On the inside of the cover of her Bible were fastened these selected verses:

"I'm kneeling at the threshold, weary, faint and sore,
Waiting for the dawning, for the opening of the door;
Waiting till the Master shall bid me rise and come,
To the glory of His presence, to the gladness of His home.

"A weary path I've traveled, 'mid darkness, storm, and strife;
Bearing many a burden, struggling for my life;
But now the morn is breaking, my toil will soon be o'er,
I'm kneeling at the threshold, my hand is on the door.

"Methinks I hear the voices of the blessed, as they stand,
Singing in the sunshine of the sinless land;
O would that I were with them, amid their shining throng,
Mingling in their worship, joining in their song.

"The friends that started with me have entered long ago,
One by one they left me, struggling with the foe;
Their pilgrimage was shorter, their triumph sooner won,
How lovingly they'll hail me when my toil is done!

“ With them the blessed angels, that know no grief
or sin,

I see them by the portals, prepared to let me in,
O Lord, I wait Thy pleasure, Thy time and way are
best;

But I am wasted, worn and weary,
O Father, bid me rest.”

“ These are they which came out of
great tribulation, and have washed their
robes, and made them white in the blood
of the Lamb.

“ Therefore are they before the throne
of God, and serve Him day and night in
His temple; and He that sitteth on the
throne shall dwell among them.

“ They shall hunger no more, neither
thirst any more; neither shall the sun
light on them, nor any heat.

“ For the Lamb which is in the midst
of the throne shall feed them, and shall
lead them unto the living fountains of
waters; and God shall wipe away all tears
from their eyes.”

Revelation vii: 14-17.

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